

This past summer, Angie and I were driving through western Wisconsin having just spent a few days with our friends and looking forward to visiting a Messianic fellowship on the Minnesota-Wisconsin border. We were on a 4-lane highway and the speed limit was 70 mph. I was doing about that. Because we have a small GPS (that Angie fondly named Gertrude), I no longer take the time to study maps before I travel and thus, I have to keep my eye on the GPS to make sure I'm following the right path.

We were going along, deep in discussion, and as we passed an exit off the highway that led to the Interstate, I thought "I bet we were supposed to take that exit." A quick glance a Gertrude verified my suspicion, but it was too late to make the turn, so I continued down the highway waiting for Gertrude to reroute me onto the interstate.

Because I was engrossed in what the GPS was showing, I didn't pay much attention to the fact that the road had narrowed to two lanes and that the speed limit had dropped to 55. Just as the GPS came up with my next turn, I saw a police car up ahead coming our way . . . and before I could push the brake to take the truck off cruise – his lights came on . . .

Oh, if I had just made the correct turn, or if we had not stopped at Wendy's, or **if I had just been paying attention!**

In pilot training, the thing that is always drilled into you is that, no matter what, FLY THE AIRPLANE! But during my distraction, I failed to "fly" the truck, and instead sort of went on autopilot.

Life is like that. We go along with everything seeming to be great when we, for a few moments, let our guard down or stop paying attention, and we do something stupid that we later regret.

In my case, my period of inattention cost us \$200, but thankfully, I didn't have a wreck, didn't hurt anyone, and nothing was destroyed. But there were still consequences. But oftentimes in life, our failure to keep focused on the right way costs a lot more.

The life of King David is an example of what I'm talking about. As one of the hero's of the Bible, he led a life of excitement, adventure, honor, and glory. But David also had his 'down' moments. For instance, soon after David had been anointed King by Samuel the prophet, he found himself on the wrong end of King Saul's spear and spent years running for his life. But David's ultimate downer was when he, for a few moments, stopped paying attention to his role and responsibilities as the King of all Israel – the people of God, and instead paid full attention to a woman named Bathsheba.

David is considered to be a "man after God's own heart". Yeshua the Messiah is referred to 16 times in the New Testament as "the Son of David" – a term that hints of righteousness and Godliness. But David had problems like the rest of us. In fact, all the great men of the Bible seemed to have problems. How is it that David, in spite of his acts of adultery and murder, could be considered worthy of the honor of being one of the major players in the lineage of The Messiah? I submit that it was because David was aware of, and fully practiced the "Salvation Cycle" that is spelled out in scripture – the formula (you might say) of how a person, or a people, become the people of God.

God has given us a way to overcome our sins. No matter what causes us to turn away from the path that He's shown, He has a way for us to get back on the correct path – all we have to do is believe it and do it. He has put before us an example, that if we were to follow, will ultimately lead to eternal reward – the Kingdom of God. That example is the people of ancient Israel, a people God Himself called out as His Chosen Ones. Within

just a few generations, the people of Ancient Israel walked the Salvation Cycle and left for us an example that we can follow.

Paul says that the story of ancient Israel was given for an example for us, the end time generation.

^{NKJ} **1 Corinthians 10:11** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

But historically, we have focused only on the bad things Israel did with the admonition not to repeat them. But Israel also did some good things and the pattern they showed can help us to understand how we can restore our relationship with our Creator after we flub up.

So . . . for the next few weeks, I want to talk about what I'm going to call "the Salvation Cycle".

Many people talk about salvation as if it's an event. They say things like "I was saved back in 1971" or "God saved me after . . ." (and they list some catastrophic event). But then they go on to talk about the years after their "salvation" as times of unscrupulous activity or participating in a "religious" practice they are no longer proud of.

Were they indeed saved? And if so, shouldn't their way of life have reflect the fact that they were saved.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that you're not actually "saved" until your change comes – the time spoken of by Paul –

^{NKJ} **1 Corinthians 15:51-52** Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Who's right? Or are both views wrong?

As we continue to study these matters from a Hebraic perspective, we find out that both views are right (to some degree) and yet both views are wrong. And in Hebraic thought – "THAT'S OK!". You see, there's this Jewish axiom that goes like this "Here now, but not yet." In essence it means that there is a partial fulfillment now to a later complete fulfillment. In other words, you did receive a salvation experience, but the full salvation is yet to come.

You see, salvation is an event, but it's only one event in a long list of events that, when laid upon each other, ultimately lead to eternal salvation, but not only to salvation, but REWARD! You might say, then, that salvation is a PROCESS that includes within it, a SALVATION event.

We're going to take a look at Salvation, but instead of focusing on the EVENT, were going to focus on the process, but before I do, I want to explain why I call it a "cycle".

As we study the process, we'll find that there are certain events that take place in a believer's life that cannot be physically repeated, yet God has given us a spiritual counterpart to help us remember the event. He does this because, as we'll see, the process that leads to ultimate salvation and reward, NEVER ENDS. It's like a wheel that goes round and round. As we find ourselves mired in sin, and desire to come back to the right way, we either consciously or unconsciously go through the process. And since sin is always knocking at the door, and of course, we oftentimes let it in, there is always a need to be participating in the cycle. And that's clue #1 that salvation from a Hebraic perspective will be different than what we were taught while looking at things from a Greek-Christian perspective. The Hebrew way is cyclical and the Greek is linear.

For example –

In Christianity some of us were taught that we were saved when we confessed Christ and were baptized. After all, didn't Yeshua Himself say –

^{NKJ} **Mark 16:16** "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

So, you believe, get baptized, and that's it! But wait, Hebrews 6 says that there are "baptisms".

^{NKJ} **Hebrews 6:1** Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,² of the doctrine of **baptisms**, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. (emphasis mine)

What's this "baptisms" thing. You mean there's more than one baptism? Where do you find that in the Bible? In Christianity there's only a need to get baptized once, but in Hebraic thought there are a number of reasons to get baptized, but most importantly, if a person is in a state of repentance, he will generally follow that by being immersed (baptized).

So a Greek thinking Christian gets baptized once, since that's one of the steps on his pathway to heaven, while a Hebraic person gets baptized often, since baptism is part of a cycle that includes redemption, repentance, and much more. For the Hebrew, baptism has a part in cleaning the sin out of our lives. Bottom line – a Greek thinking person is striving for a defined goal that has steps that have to be taken or obstacles that have to be crossed, where a Hebraic thinking person simply strives to be what God wants.

So what is the process? The process includes many things – events that take place each time we find ourselves in bondage to sin. As long as we're striving for the kingdom, we'll be following this cycle of events. But it's important to understand the meaning and purpose of each event. Because God has blinded the eyes of many of our teachers to the true meaning and purpose of some of the events, we sometimes want to skip some of them, thinking that they may be meaningless for us today, but as we'll see, they are all important.

The process includes, but is not limited to, these events:

- ✧ Bondage / Sin
- ✧ Redemption
- ✧ Repentance
- ✧ Baptism
- ✧ Salvation
- ✧ Faith
- ✧ Covenant
 - Terms of the Covenant
 - Signs of the Covenant
- ✧ Works
- ✧ Reward / Punishment

Thankfully, we have examples of all these in the plight of the Israelites as they found themselves in bondage to Pharaoh and began their walk to the Promised Land. Thus it's not too hard to see this all in action. We can also see many of the aspects of the Salvation Cycle play out in the narrative of David's life. And of course, we'll see how they can apply to us today.

So let's get started by taking a look at the first item on the list – Sin and Bondage. After all, the rest of this is somewhat meaningless without the understanding that there is sin in our lives.

The Apostle John has a lot to say about sin . . .

^{NKJ} **1 John 1:8** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

^{ESV} **1 John 3:4** Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

From these two verses we can gain a lot of understanding. First – if a person thinks he has no sin, he clearly does not have God’s law written on his heart, for Yeshua clearly says that “. . . Your word is truth , , ,” and God specifically tells us to write His words in our heart (Deut. 6:6). Secondly - sin is not obeying God’s law, the Torah. Therefore, when a person walks contrary to God’s law, they are committing sin.

So then, these verses come into play . . .

^{NKJ} **Ezekiel 18:20** "The soul who sins shall die.

^{NKJ} **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So it’s important for us to understand sin! The Hebrew concept of sin is of an archer who doesn’t take pains to hit his target. The Hebrew word for “sin” is “hatah” (חָטָא) which means “to miss the way” or “to miss the mark”. On the other hand, the word law is “torah” (תּוֹרָה) means “instructions in the way” and comes from the Hebrew root word “yarah” (יָרָה) which means to shoot an arrow. Thus, following Torah will cause a person to “hit the mark” while sin is simply “missing the mark”.

Sometimes we sin willingly – intending to not “hit the mark” while at other times we sin out of ignorance – a careless aim. In either case it’s still sin, but God deals with each case differently. For instance, Numbers 15 shows that God deals differently with a person’s un-intentional sins than he does for his intentional sins.

The big problem with unintentional sin is that it brings a person into bondage. For instance – God promised the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the land of Canaan was to be their inheritance. I’m sure Jacob’s sons were quite familiar with those promises. But were they as diligent in trying to insure the promises would come to pass as their father Jacob, and his mother Rebecca, had been. And if not, was that a sin – maybe a sin of omission?

Because of a famine – a test you might say – the son’s of Jacob went to Egypt. God allowed them to go there for a season – at least until the end of the famine. But what happened? They were given a pretty good piece of real estate to live on during the famine, and so after the famine it was sort of hard to pick up and move again. After all, they had had to move all their lives – their father Jacob didn’t seem to settle down.

Years went by and things were pretty nice in Egypt. I’m sure the heads of the various clans and heads of each home pondered over the thought of moving on out of Egypt. Surely they noticed the people gradually accepting the worship of the Egyptian gods – but the food was so good in Egypt. “Just a few more years” they thought. But each night, and with each newborn son, the Israelite fathers remembered the sign that they wore – reminding them of the covenant made with their fathers, the promised inheritance, . . . “but the food is so good here”.

Sin had them. They were already in bondage. Even before there was a “Pharoah who knew not Joseph”, they were in bondage . . . **and they didn’t even know it!**

Many today are in bondage to things they never intended to be involved in. How many drug addicts started smoking pot with the intent of becoming addicted? How many of us drink a glass of wine with the intent of becoming an alcoholic? How many fathers work 16 hours a day “for their family”, never intending to become a “workaholic” and depriving their family of the nurturing they need? Many of us are guilty. Letting our guard down caused us to become slaves to those things. Yeshua says that “. . . whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. (John 8:34)

So when you’re in bondage, what do you do? The first step in any of these situations, as any councilor will say, is admitting that you have a problem. Israel did not recognize they were in trouble till there rose to power “a Pharoah who knew not Joseph”. After a few years of having to deal with the bondageⁱ, they remembered the promises and began to cry out to God for a deliverer.

Exodus 2:23 Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.

So the people cried out. It wasn't just a cry to anyone, it was a cry to the God of their fathers (the Hebrew for "cry out" is "shavah" שָׁוָה (Strong's 7775) and is only used in the case of people crying out to God). So we see that in order to bring about salvation, a person must first recognize that he's in bondage, then cry out to God to help him out of the mess he's in. Another example of that is King David who failed to recognize his sin in regards Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite until Nathan the prophet showed David his sin.

So we see in this passage the first step in the Salvation Cycle. We must recognize our sins. What was the sin of the Israelites in Egypt? I believe it is that they forgot the covenant made with their fathers and stayed in Egypt. I would suspect that they knew all along that they should get out, but for whatever reason, they chose not to.

Our next step in the cycle is Redemption, and we'll cover it next time.

Shalom

ⁱ The Hebrew word for bondage (Exodus 1:13-14) is "avodah" עֲבֹדָה (Strong's 5656). It's the same word that is used for the services in the Tabernacle (see various passages in Numbers chapters 1 – 8 and 18). In a way it's saying that you either serve God or you're in bondage to someone or something other than God.